

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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R 250605Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6329
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 KUALA LUMPUR 1215

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FOR EA ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS - DECLASSIFY DEC 31, 1978
TAGS: PFOR US XB
SUBJ: U.S. POLICY ON SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE POST VIETNAM PERIOD

REF: STATE 25347

1. MY COLLEAGUES HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT WE CONTINUE, WITH
SOME MINOR MODIFICATIONS, OUR PRESENT POLICY TOWARDS
SOUTHEAST ASIA. I DON'T AGREE BECAUSE I FEEL THAT TO STAY
ON THIS COURSE FAILS TO RECOGNIZE ADEQUATELY THE CHANGES
THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE AREA IN THE PAST TWO DECADES,

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AND IN SOME RESPECTS RUNS COUNTER TO THE COURSE OF NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT WHICH THE NATIONS OF THE AREA HAVE SET FOR
THEMSELVES AND WHICH WE SAY WE FAVOR.

2. WHEN THE UNITED STATES BEGAN TO HAVE A POLICY TOWARDS
SOUTHEAST ASIA AT THE END OF WWII, WE WERE FORCED INTO THE
ROLE OF PATRON, PROTECTOR, AND BENEFACITOR BY THE CONDITIONS

WE FOUND HERE. DESOLATED BY THE WAR AND THE SUBSEQUENT INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLES, IT WAS AN AREA OF ALMOST UNIVERSAL ECONOMIC BACKWARDNESS, POVERTY AND DISEASE. THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT STATES WERE POLITICALLY UNSTABLE, CHALLENGED BY INSURGENCIES, GOVERNED BY TINY ELITES OF INEXPERIENCED, UNTRAINED MEN.

3. AFTER THE FALL OF CHINA WE WERE DETERMINED TO STEM THE SPREAD OF COMMUNISM INTO SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND WE WERE WORRIED THAT THE DESPERATE PEOPLE OF THE AREA WOULD FIND IN MARXISM A SEDUCTIVELY ATTRACTIVE SHORTCUT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL IDENTITY AT THE SACRIFICE OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM.

4. IN LOCO PARENTIS, WE COUNSELED, EXHORTED, PLANNED, FUNDED, TRAINED. WE BOUND THE NEW NATIONS TO US WITH PROMISES OF PROTECTION, AND TRIED TO LINE THEM UP ON OUR SIDE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. WE PROVIDED THEIR ARMED FORCES WITH HARDWARE AND TRAINED THEIR SOLDIERS IN HOW TO USE IT. SOME RESISTED OUR EMBRACE (BURMA, INDONESIA) AND CONSORTED WITH BAD COMPANIONS. WE PREACHED TO THEM ABOUT THE IMMORALITY OF NEUTRALISM AND PERSISTED IN OUR EFFORTS TO WIN THEM OVER. IN INDOCHINA WE MADE A MAJOR NATIONAL SACRIFICE IN THEIR BEHALF. THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD WE WERE ACTIVE, THEY WERE PASSIVE. WE DECIDED WHAT WAS BEST FOR THEM, AND DID OUR BEST TO PROVIDE WHAT WE THOUGHT THEY SHOULD HAVE.

5. THE SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TODAY IS STRIKINGLY DIFFERENT. ECONOMICALLY THE ASEAN AREA IS TODAY ONE OF THE MOST RAPIDLY DEVELOPING MARKETS IN THE WORLD. PER SECRET

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CAPITA GNP IS GROWING STEADILY, AND IN 1975 ASEAN HAD A TRADE SURPLUS WITH BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN. CRUSHING POVERTY AND OTHER STAGGERING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS PERSIST, OF COURSE, BUT OUR CAPACITY TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THEM HAS ALMOST COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED. HOWEVER POOR THE PEOPLE, WE ARE DEALING WITH SLEEK, PROSPEROUS GOVERNMENTS WHO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS. NO LONGER CAN AN AID MISSION DIRECTOR OR A COLOMBO PLAN ADVISOR HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON ECONOMIC POLICY. THESE FUNCTIONS ARE NOW DIRECTED BY THEIR OWN PROFESSIONALS WITH ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS AND TECHNICAL SKILLS EQUAL TO ANYTHING WE CAN PROVIDE. FAILURES AND SHORTCOMING DO NOT COME FROM ANY LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, BUT RATHER FROM POLITICO-ECONOMIC FACTORS WHICH THESE TECHNOCRATS, AND CERTAINLY WE, CANNOT CONTROL. OUR AID MISSIONS HAVE BECOME ANACHROMISMS, STILL DOING "GOOD", OF COURSE BUT PERPETUATING ATTITUDES OF DEPENDENCY AND PRESERVING THE RESENTMENTS AND FALSE EXPECTATIONS OF A PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP WE SHOULD HAVE LONG SINCE LEFT BEHIND.

6. POLITICALLY WE ARE DEALING WITH TOUGH, AUTHORITARIAN, AND -- IN THE RELATIVE SENSE THAT THE WORD MUST ALWAYS BE USED -- STABLE GOVERNMENTS. LIKE ALL GOVERNMENTS, THEY MUST TAKE THE WISHES OF THE UNITED STATES INTO ACCOUNT, BUT IN BOTH DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY THEY FOLLOW AN INDEPENDENT COURSE. OUR ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND FORMAL SECURITY TIES APPEAR TO MAKE NO PERCEPTIBLE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR WILLINGNESS TO FOLLOW OUR LEAD IN INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. THEIR LEADERS ARE (THAILAND PERHAPS EXCEPTED) SUPREMELY CONFIDENT MEN, AND FAR FROM PLIANT PAWNS, SEVERAL OF THEM HAVE DEVELOPED CONSIDERABLE SKILLS AT MANIPULATING US. ANYONE WHO HAS SEEN MARCOS OR LEE KUAN YEW TAKING ON A SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIAL FOR THE FIRST TIME CAN ATTEST TO THIS.

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7. THE INTERNATIONAL IDEOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT IS STRIKINGLY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WAS TWO DECADES AGO. THE "SOCIALIST

CAMP" IS NOW A MARE'S NEST OF SCHISMS AND RIVALRIES. MARXISM IS NO LONGER INTELLECTUALLY RESPECTABLE, AND "FELLOW TRAVELER" HAS DISAPPEARED FROM OUR POLITICAL VOCABULARY. COMMUNISM IS NO LONGER REGARDED SERIOUSLY IN NTNCOMMUNIST ASIA AS AN ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION. IT IS SYMPTOMATIC THAT TWO MEN WE HAD FIRMLY PEGGED IN 1957 AS DANGEROUS CRYPTO-COMMUNISTS ARE NOW THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF INDONESIA AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF SINGAPORE.

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8. THAILAND, MALAYSIA, AND THE PHILIPPINES STILL FACE TROUBLESOME RESIDUAL COMMUNIST INSURGENCIES, BUT WE ARE AGREED THAT THEY NOW REPRESENT NO SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO THE STABILITY OF THESE REGIMES. THEY CAN BECOME SUCH A THREAT ONLY AS A PART OF A GENERAL POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL BREAKDOWN (NOT NOW ANTICIPATED) WHICH WOULD ARISE FROM THE FAILURES AND INADEQUACIES OF THE REGIME ITSELF. WE NOW DO NOT, IF INDEED WE EVER DID, HAVE THE ABILITY TO AFFECT DIRECTLY THE POLICIES AND BEHAVIOR OF THESE GOVERNMENTS, AND WE CANNOT PROTECT THEM FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR OWN CUPIDITY, STUPIDITY, OR BRUTALITY. WE ARE PROPERLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE INTERVENTION OF THE COMMUNIST POWERS INTO THIS EQUATION, BUT EVEN IN THAILAND, WHERE THE SRV CAPACITY FOR MISCHIEF IS CONSIDERABLE, IT IS THE RTG ADEQUACY, NOT THE VIETNAMESE MALEVOLENCE THAT IS CRUCIAL.

9. WE HAVE THEREFORE TODAY AN AREA THAT IS STANDING ON ITS OWN FEET, MAKING ITS OWN DECISIONS, FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE. LOCAL LEADERS SPEAK PROUDLY OF SELF-RELIANCE AND NATIONAL RESILIENCE. THE NATIONS OF THE AREA NO LONGER NEED THE SAME KIND OF HELP FROM US AND THEY ARE NO LONGER SUBJECT TO OUR CONTROL. WE SHOULD THEREFORE NOT CONTINUE TO ASSUME THE SAME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR WELFARE. WE RECOGNIZED THIS TREND IN THE GUAM DOCTRINE IN 1969. THE TREND HAS PROCEEDED EXPONENTIALLY IN THE INTERVENING EIGHT YEARS AND WE SHOULD ACCEPT AND ENCOURAGE IT BY ELIMINATING THE OBSOLETE PATERNALISTIC ELEMENTS WHICH REMAIN IN OUR RELATIONS.

10. FIRST WE SHOULD WITHDRAW THE AID MISSIONS. THIS DOES NOT MEAN AN END TO ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE FOUND WAYS TO TRANSFER ASSETS WITHOUT A LARGE, CONSPICUOUS PRESENCE WHICH PROCLAIMS DEPENDENCE AND ECONOMIC INADEQUACY.

11. OUR MILITARY RELATIONS WITH THE AREA ARE THE MOST

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DIFFICULT FOR US TO DEAL WITH FOR IT IS HERE THAT THE PATTERNS OF THE PAST ARE MOST DEEPLY INGRAINED. WE ARE DEALING IN THREE COUNTRIES WITH POLITICALLY POWERFUL MILITARY ELITES WHO HAVE DEEP PROFESSIONAL TIES WITH OUR MILITARY SERVICES AND PAROCHIAL SERVICES INTERESTS IN A CONTINUING FLOW OF ARMS AND MATERIEL. CHANGE IN THIS AREA WILL BE DIFFICULT, BUT IT IS IN OUR OWN INTERESTS, AND IN THE LONG RANGE INTERESTS OF THE AREA THAT CHANGES SHOULD BE MADE.

12. MY COLLEAGUES ALL FEEL THAT WE MUST CONTINUE TO STABILIZE THE POWER EQUILIBRIUM IN THE AREA, AND THAT TO BE ABLE TODO SO, WE MUST KEEP OUR BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES. I DO NOT FEEL THAT WE NEED TO PLAY THIS PATERNALISTIC PROTECTOR ROLE ANY LONGER. THERE IS NO CONVENTIONAL MILITARY THREAT. THE NATIONS OF THE AREA ARE POLITICALLY MATURE AND SUSPICIOUS OF THE RUSSIANS. WHY CAN'T WE ALLOW THEM TO STABILIZE THEIR OWN EQUILIBRIUM? WHY SHOULDN'T WE LET THEM DECIDE THE LEVEL OF AMERICAN PRESENCE THEY FEEL IS NECESSARY (AND ARE WILLING TO ACKNOWLEDGE) TO MEET THEIR ESTIMATE OF THE SOVIET THREAT. THE RUSSIANS, WITHOUT BASES IN THE AREA, ARE ABLE TO MAINTAIN A NAVAL PRESENCE SUFFICIENT TO CAUSE US CONCERN. COULDN'T WE DO THE SAME?

13. WE SHOULD FACE THE UNPLEASANT FACT THAT THE NONCOMMUNIST STATES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA SEE A CLOSE MILITARY ASSOCIATION WITH US AS A POLITICAL LIABILITY. NONE OF THEIR LEADERS HAS SPOKEN FAVORABLY IN PUBLIC OF AMERICAN BASES, EVEN ON PHILIPPINE TERRITORY, MUCH LESS ON THEIR OWN SOIL. EVEN THE FIRE-BREATHING MR. LEE LACKS THE POLITICAL WILL (AND STAYING POWER) TO ACCEPT P-3 RECONNAISSANCE STAGING THROUGH SINGAPORE WITHOUT SOME AUSTRALIAN CAMOUFLAGE. THE MAP RECIPIENTS WOULD PREFER TO HAVE THE MONEY SLIPPED UNDER THE DOOR IN A BROWN MANILA ENVELOPE ONCE A YEAR IF THEY THOUGHT WE WOULD DO IT THAT WAY.

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14. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE CHORUSES OF "I WANT TO HOLD YOUR HAND" WE STILL HEAR AROUND THE AREA? SOME OF THIS IS GENUINE, -- AS GENUINE AS THE TEARS THE MOTHER HEARS AT THE DOORWAY OF THE KINDERGARTEN ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. THE HABITS OF DEPENDENCY PERSIST. IT IS NATURAL TO CLING TO THE PROTECTOR. SOME OF IT IS ALSO CALCULATED. THE INDONESIAN GENERAL ARE AFRAID WE WILL WITHDRAW OUR MONEYBAGS, NOT OUR FLEET. SINGAPORE AS THE SMALLEST BOY ON THE PLAYGROUND WANTS THE MONITORS TO STAY AROUND. LEE IS NOT

WORRIED ABOUT THE RUSSIANS AND THE CHINESE, BUT ABOUT UNFRIENDLY REGIMES OF ANY COMPLEXION IN JAKARTA AND KUALA LUMPUR. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT SINGAPORE IS BY FAR THE MOST HOSPITABLE TO THE RUSSIANS OF ANY ASEAN COUNTRY. IT PROVIDES BUNKERING AND SUPPLY FACILITIES TO SOVIET MERCHANT AND NAVAL AUXILIARY VESSELS, PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION SERVICES FOR SOVIET TRAWLERS IN A JOINT FISHING VENTURE, PERMITS THE MOSCOW NARODNY BANK TO OPERATE A BRANCH, AND TRAINS KGB AGENTS IN CHINESE. SINGAPORE WOULD LIKE THE RUSSIANS TO STICK AROUND TOO.

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15. A CLOSE MILITARY ASSOCIATION ALSO CARRIES SERIOUS POLITICAL LIABILITIES FOR US. THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT WE PROVIDE UNDER GRANT MAP AND FMS PROGRAMS IS FAR MORE LIKELY TO BE USED AGAINST THEIR OWN PEOPLE OR THEIR NEIGHBORS THAN AGAINST COMMUNIST AGGRESSION. ONLY THE HAPPY ABSENCE OF A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF TIMORESE-AMERICANS

AND MORO-AMERICANS PREVENTED OUTCRIES OVER THE USE OF
AMERICAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE BY THE INDONESIANS TO ABSORB EAST
TIMOR AND BY THE FILIPINOS TO SUPPRESS THEIR MUSLIM BROTHERS
IN THE SOUTH. THE PRESENCE OF A MAG OR MLG CREATES AN
UNDESIRABLE DEGREE OF INTIMACY, AND ASSOCIATES US WILLY-NILLY
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WITH HOST GOVERNMENT MILITARY ACTIONS AND POLICIES OVER WHICH
WE HAVE NO CONTROL AND WITH WHICH WE MAY STRONGLY DISAPPROVE.

16. THE UTILITY AND DESIRABILITY OF THE DEFENSE COMMITMENTS
WE HAVE WITH THE PHILIPPINES AND THAILAND ARE OPEN TO SERIOUS
QUESTION. EVEN AT THE TIME THEY WERE WRITTEN THEY WERE
DIRECTLY AGAINST UNLIKELY POSSIBILITIES, -- OVERT
COMMUNIST AGGRESSION. THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TOO CONDITIONAL
FOR THE THAIS AND FILIPINOS WHO HAVE TRIED PERSISTENTLY TO
MAKE THEM AUTOMATIC. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ARGUE SERIOUSLY THAT
THEY ARE DETERRING A CHINESE, SOVIET, OR VIETNAMESE ATTACK.
ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE THEY HAVE ENCOURAGED UNHEALTHY ATTITUDES
OF INADEQUACY AND DEPENDENCY, AS WELL AS A DISPOSITION TO SEE
NATIONAL DEFENSE AS MORE OUR RESPONSIBILITY THAN THEIRS.
MARCOS IN A RECENT PRESS INTERVIEW LINKED THE END OF MARTIAL
LAW WITH AN UNCONDITIONAL U.S. DEFENSE GUARANTEE; TOTAL
DEPENDENCE ON US PLUS A HANDSOME FEE FOR THE RIGHT TO
PROVIDE THE SERVICE, -- A COMPLETE RETURN TO THE WOMB. IN
THEIR EYES THE SECURITY AGREEMENT PUTS UNDER OBLIGATION
TO SIDE WITH THEM IN ALL THEIR QUARRELS, DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN.
EMBASSY MANILA HAS REPORTED (A-25,1/27/77) THAT YOUNG
FILIPINO ARMY OFFICERS WERE RESENTFUL THAT THE U.S. DID
NOT SUPPORT THEM IN THE FIGHTING AGAINST THE MOROS. IN
LATE 1968, STUDENTS SENT BY MARCOS BURNED BOB MCCLOSKEY IN
EFFIGY AT THE EMBASSY GATE BECAUSE HE HAD SAID, AS SPOKESMAN,
THAT THE U.S. DID NOT SUPPORT THE PHILIPPINE CLAIM TO SABAH.
IN THEIR VIEW WE WOULD BE OBLIGED TO JOIN THEM IF THEY GOT
INTO A SCRAP WITH THE SRV OR THE PRC OVER THE SPRATLYS.
ALL OF THIS REFLECTS A WARPED, UNREALISTIC PERCEPTION OF
WHAT THEY CAN PROPERLY EXPECT OF THE UNITED STATES.

17. TO PLACE OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AREA ON A
PROPER FOOTING WE SHOULD TAKE THE FOLLOWING STPS:

A. WITHDRAW, AFTER APPROPRIATE NOTIFICATION AND
CONSULTATIONS, OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE MISSIONS. ARMS SALES
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CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT THIS POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

OVERHEAD.

B. OPEN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE THAIS AND THE FILIPINOS
TO BRING THE SECURITY AGREEMENTS INTO HARMONY WITH CURRENT
POLITICAL REALITY.

18. I AM NOT RECOMMENDING A MILITARY PULL OUT FROM SOUTHEAST
ASIA. I BELIEVE THAT A REORDERING OF OUR APPROACH
AND THE STRUCTURE OF OUR PRESENCE IS NECESSARY BUT THAT WE
CAN EMERGE WITH A DIFFERENT KIND OF MILITARY PRESENCE AND
RELATIONSHIP THAT WOULD BETTER MEET BOTH OUR NEEDS AND THE
NEEDS OF THE REGION.

19. MOST OF MY COLLEAGUES FEEL THAT ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE
IN PRESENT MILITARY RELATIONS WOULD HAVE A SWEIOLUSLY
DESTABILIZING EFFECT IN THE AREA. THIS FEAR SEEMS TO ME TO
REFLECT AN UNDERESTIMATION OF REGIONAL MATURITY THAT IS PART
OF THE PATERNALISTIC ATTITUDE WE SHOULD BE TRYING TO LEAVE
BEHIND. THE NATIONS OF THE AREA ACCEPTED THE FALL OF VIETNAM

WITH RESOLUTION AND FIRMNESS. THERE WAS NO PANIC. THEY
KNOW THAT GRANT MAP IS FAKING FAST. THEY KNOW THE LIMITATION
CONGRESS HAS IMPOSED ON THE PRESIDENT'S FREEDOM TO USE
MILITARY FORCE. THEY CAN READ THE MOOD OF THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE. THEIR LEADERS ARE TOUGH, PRAGMATIC, CYNICAL MEN
WHO NEED NO PLEDGES OF CONSTANCY FROM US TO SUSTAIN THEIR WILL TO
RULE.

20. THE DELIBERATE AMBIGUITY THAT LIES AT THE CORE OF OUR
SECURITY COMMITMENTS CAUSES MORE TREPIDATION THAN A FRANK
STATEMENT FROM US THAT WE CANNOT GIVE AN IRONCLAD, UNCONDITIONAL
DEFENSE GUARANTEE, THAT AS A FRIEND WE ARE CONCERNED FOR THEIR
SECURITY, AND THAT IF IT IS THREATENED WE WILL TAKE SUCH
MEASURES, IN CONSULTATION WITH THEM, AS WE DEEM APPROPRIATE
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TO HELP THEM PRESERVE IT, -- AS WE WOULD DO FOR ANY FRIENDLY
POWER. THERE WOULD, OF COURSE, BE INITIAL ANXIETY AND CONCERN
IN SOME CIRCLES, BUT LIKE THE WISE MOTHER AT THE KINDERGARTEN
DOOR, WE SHOULD IGNORE THE TEARS, CONFIDENT THAT A NEW, MORE
MATURE, SELF-RELIANT ATTITUDE WILL TAKE ITS PLACE.

21. WE SHOULD TALK LESS ABOUT OUR RELATIONS WITH SOUTHEAST
ASIA. WE ARE PATRONIZING IN OUR REPEATED ASSURANCES OF
DEVOTION AND REDUNDANT IN OUR PROCLAMATIONS THAT WE ARE A
PACIFIC POWER. JACK NICKLAUS DOESN'T NEED TO SAY AT FREQUENT
INTERVALS THAT HE IS A PROFESSIONAL GOLFER.

22. THERE ARE MANY WAYS THAT WE CAN SHOW OUR CONTINUED

INTEREST AND CONCERN FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA. TRADE POLICY, COMMODITY AGREEMENTS, COOPERATION WITH ASEAN, INCREASED EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES COME IMMEDIATELY TO MIND. WITH THE UNHEALTHY INTIMACY OF THE OLD PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP REMOVED, WITH A DECENT DISTANCE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN US AND REGIMES WE DO LONGER NEED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR, WE CAN BUILD A NEW, MORE MATURE, MORE EQUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA.

23. I TOO FEEL I SHOULD CLOSE WITH SOME REFERENCE TO BURMA. DAVE OSBORN IS RIGHT. BURMA HAS SHOWN THAT HUCKLEBERRY FINN CAN STAY UNWASHED, UNSCHOOLED, UNCHAPERONED, AND SURVIVE, -- PERHAPS NOT WELL, BUT SURVIVE, ON NUTS AND BERRIES.
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